

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4214

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 NICOSIA 2491

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM HOUGHTON AND MACK

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJ: MOOD IN CHRISTIAN LEBANON AND SUMMARY OF JOUNIEH MISSION

1. AFTER A LONG (21 HOURS) AND ROUGH VOYAGE IN A SHIP ONLY SLIGHTLY LARGER THAN THE ANCIENT ARGO, WE ARRIVED IN JOUNIEH AT 6:00 P.M., AUGUST 21. WITH LITTEL DIFFICULTY WE PASSED THROUGH CUSTOMS AND TAXIED TO OUR HOTEL. THERE WE MET OUR FOREIGN SERVICE LOCAL ASSISTANT, JOHN KHAWAND, WHO HAD MISSED US AT THE PORT. EXCEPT THAT MOST MEN WERE VISIBLY ARMED AND THE PACE AND EXTENT OF COMMERCIAL AND OTHER ACTIVITY WAS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN BEFORE, JOUNIEH SUPERFICIALLY LOOKED MUCH THE SAME.

2. IN OUR EFFORTS TO CONTACT EMBASSY BEIRUT, WE QUICKLY LEARNED THAT THERE ARE PRACTICALLY NO DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN JOUNIEH AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD. WE WERE UNABLE TO TELEPHONE BEIRUT DURING THE PERIOD OF OUR VISIT. WE INFORMED EMBASSY BEIRUT OF OUR ARRIVAL BY A SMALL RADIO (PR-56) WE BROUGHT WITH US AND BY KHAWAND FROM HIS HOME IN EAST BEIRUT. ISOLATION IS ONE OF THE HANDICAPS THE PEOPLE OF JOUNIEH ARE BEARING AND WHICH OF COURSE INFLUENCES THEIR OUTLOOK.

3. OUR MISSION BEGAN ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. WE WERE ABLE TO CONTACT MICHEL KHOURY WHO INVITED US TO DINE AT A

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LOCAL RESTAURANT THAT NIGHT. NICHEL IS THE SON OF A

FORMER PRESIDENT, A FORMER MINISTER, A WELL-INFORMED POLITICAL OBSERVER, AND A CLOSE FRIEND OF MINE. AT NIGHT JOUNIEH IS DARKENED BUT NOT BLACKED OUT. THE RESTAURANT IN WHICH WE ATE WAS IDEAL FOR DISCUSSION, AS IT WAS PRACTICALLY EMPTY, ALTHOUGH A SHORT WAY AWAY THERE WERE PEOPLE DANCING -- "SOLDIERS," MICHEL COMMENTED, "WHO FIGHT BY DAY AND DANCE AT NIGHT." NIGHT LIFE AND SOCIAL LIFE ARE SORELY LIMITED, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS BEING CONSIDERED IMPROPER UNDER CURRENT CONDITIONS BUT ALSO BECAUSE ELECTRICITY IS AVAILABLE ONLY FOR SHORT PERIODS DURING THE DAY AND NIGHT. ALTHOUGH THERE APPEARS SUFFICIENT FOOD, VARIETY IS LIMITED BOTH BECAUSE OF SHORTAGES AND LIMITED REFRIGERATION. THE WHOLE TENOR OF LIFE HAS BECOME MUCH MORE SIMPLE AND INFORMAL.

4. THE NEXT MORNING WE HAD OUR FIRST TASTE OF SHELLFIRE WHEN A SHELL EXPLODED JUST BEHIND THE HOTEL. WE HEARD ONE OR TWO SHELLS OVER THE NEXT DAYS. THE NIGHTS WERE QUIET. WE WERE TOLD THAT WHAT SHELLING THERE WAS OCCURRED DURING THE DAY AND CAME FROM WEST BEIRUT AND, ACCORDING TO CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S SON, DORY, FROM POSITIONS NEAR OUR EMBASSY. SECURITY, EXCEPT FOR THE OCCASIONAL SHELLFIRE, DOES NOT AT THE MOMENT SEEM A PROBLEM, ALTHOUGH AT THE END, WHEREVER WE WENT, A LEBANESE SECURITY CAR WITH PLAIN-CLOTHESMEN WENT FIRST. WE EVENTUALLY ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH LEBANESE SECURITY WHICH COOPERATED FULLY WITH OUR OWN SECURITY OFFICERS.

5. WE ARRANGED ON AUGUST 22 OUR SCHEDULE WITH THE HELP OF JOHN KHAWAND AND MICHEL KHOURY. MANY OF THE TELEPHONE CALLS I MADE MYSELF DIRECTLY. I FIRST MADE A BRIEF VISIT TO LUCIEN DAHDAH CONCERNING LIAISON WITH LOCAL SECURITY AFFAIRS AND OUR APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT FRANGIEH. LUCIEN IS THE HEAD OF INTRA BANK AND ONE OF PRESIDENT FRANGIEH'S CLOSE ADVISORS. THE PRESIDENT LIVES IN DAHDAH'S HOUSE. AT NOON, WE DROVE WITH ESCORT TO HAZMIEH (ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF EAST BEIRUT) TO CALL ON PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS. ALTHOUGH THE TRAFFIC ON THE AUTOSTRAD WAS NOT NORMAL, THERE WAS PLENTY OF TRAFFIC UNTIL WE WERE WEST OF TEL ZAATER IN EAST BEIRUT WHERE WE BECAME

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VIRTUALLY UNIQUE AND WHERE FEW PEOPLE WALK ABOUT. WE WERE IMPRESSED BOTH BY THE DAMAGE TO MANY BUILDINGS BUT ALSO BY THE MANY BUILDINGS WHICH SEEMED UNMARKED.

6. PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS IS PERHAPS THE LONELIEST MAN WE SAW. HIS APARTMENT IS LOCATED IN A REGION WHERE THERE HAS BEEN HEAVY SHELLING AND FIGHTING. IN THE LIVINGROOM HIS WOODEN BLINDS ARE DRAWN TO AVOID STRAY

BULLETS, WHILE THE WINDOWS AND DOOR IN HIS DININGROOM ARE
WALLED UP TO BLICK SNIPER FIRE. WHILE WE LUNCHEDED WITH
HIM WE COULD HEAR CLEARLY SMALL ARMS AND SHELLFIRE.

7. OUR FIRST DAY ENDED WITH A LONG TALK WITH DORY
CHAMOUN, PRESIDENT CHAMOUN'S SON, WHO CAME TO THE HOTEL
FOR AN HOUR-AND-A-HALF DISCUSSION IN OUR ROOM. (PRESIDENT
CHAMOUN LATER CONFIRMED THAT HE ENDORSED FORY'S REMARKS.)

8. THE NEXT MORNING (AUGUST 23) WE WERE OFF AT THE CRACK
OF DAWN TOMEET WITH SHEIKH PIERE GEMAYEL, THE HEAD OF
THE PHALANGE WHO HEADQUARTERS A GOOD DEAL OF THE TIME IN
HIS LOVELY 400-YEAR-OLD ANCESTRAL HOUSE PERCHED IN THE
MOUNTAINS IN BIKFAYA (APPROXIMATELY HALF AN HOUR'S RIDE
EAST GROM JOUNIEH). HIS HOUSE IN BEIRUT HAS BEEN BADLY
DAMAGED. IN FACT, NONE OF THE RANKING POLITICAL LEADERS
LIVE IN JOUNIEH, ALTHOUGH ALL CAN BE REACHED FROM THERE.
FROM OUR DRIVE UP TO BIKFAYA, LIFE IN THE MOUNTAIN

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FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4215

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 NICOSIA 2491

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM HOUGHTON AND MACK

VILLAGES OUT OF THE BATTLE ZONE APPEARS RELATIVELY
NORMAL.

9. AT NOON WE MET WITH PRESIDENT FRANGIEH AND FORMER
PRESIDENT CHAMOUN WHO, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, WAS THERE
IN HIS CAPACITY AS FOREIGN MINISTER, ALTHOUGH WE WERE
CAREFUL TO ADDRESS HIM AS "MR. PRESIDENT." THE ISSUE
OF CHAMOUN'S FOREIGN MINISTER STATUS NEVER CAME UP IN

OUR CONVERSATIONS. (WE NEVER DID SEE CHAMOUN ALONE, ALTHOUGH HE SPECIFICALLY ASKED TO SEE US ON OUR RETURN.) AFTER OUR ONE-AND-A-HALF -HOUR MEETING WE WERE JOINED FOR LUNCH BY MRS. FRANGIEH AND DAUGHTER AND BY THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR WHO, INCONVENIENTLY OR BY DESIGN OF THE LEBANESE, APPEARED AFTER TRAVELLING FROM WEST BEIRUT. LATER IN THE AFTERNOON I CALLED ON THE PATRIARCH WHILE MACK MET WITH KARIM PAKRADOUNI, DIRECTOR OF THE PHALANGE POLITIBURO. THAT EVENING WE DINED AT MICHEL KHOURY'S HOUSE WITH FOUAD BOUTROS, A LEADING ADVISOR OF SARKIS AND A FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER. BEFORE DINNER, GHASSAN TWEINI, A MINISTER IN KARAMI'S GOVERNMENT AND EDITOR AND PUBLISHER OF LEBANON'S MOST IMPORTANT DAILY, MET WITH US FOR ABOUT AN HOUR.

10. THE MORNING G OF OUR DEPARTURE (AUGUST 24) WE CALLED ON "THE MONKS" HEADED BY PERE CHARBEL KASSIS. AMIN GEMAYEL, A DEPUTY AND ELDEST SON OF SHELIKH PIERRE, CALLED ON US AT THE BOAT JUST BEFORE WE LEFT.

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11. WE WERE RECIEVED CORDIALLY AND WARMLY BY ALL THOSE WITH WHOM WE TALKED. THE VISIT WAS COVERED EXTENSIVELY AND ON THE WHOLE ACCURATELY BY THE LOCAL PRESS. WE BELIEVE OUR VISIT HAS TO SOME EXTENT REASSURED THE CHRISTIANS THAT THE USG IS INTERESTED IN THEIR FATE OR AT LEAST IS NOT AGAINST THEM, A VIEW SOME OF OUR CONTACTS EXPRESSED. THE PREVAILING THEME WHICH WE HAD TO COUNTER THROUGHOUT OUR MEETINGS WAS A DEEP SENSE OF ABANDONMENT BY THEIR GREAT AND GOOD FRIEND, THE U.S. WE HAD TO REMIND THEM OF THE EFFORTS WE HAVE MADE TO ASSIST THE RESOTRATION OF PEACE IN THEIR TROUBLED LAND. THE CHRISTIANS ARE NATURALLY PLEASED BY THEIR SUCCESSES, BUT THE MORE MODERATE ONES, SUCH AS SEMAYEL, ARE APPALLED AT THE COST IN HUMAN AND PHYSICAL TERMS. THEY DEEPLY SENSE THE URGENCY OF AN END TO THE FIGHTING BUT NOT AT THE COST OF BACKSLIDING OT THE STATUS QUO ANTE OR ANYTHING CLOSE TO IT. IN THEIR EYES, THE STATUS OF THE PALESTINIANS IS THE CENTRAL PROBLEM. THE CHRISTIANS ARE DETERMINED THAT THEY WILL NOT TOLERATE AGAIN THE ROLE WHICH THE PALESTINIANS HAVE PLAYED IN LEBANON TO DATE. THE PURELY LEBANESE PROBLEMS, THEY FEEL, ARE MCUH MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOLUTION BUT CAN BE RESOLVED ONLY AFTER THE CENTRAL ISSUE IS SATIS-FACTORILY SETTLED.

12. MORALE AMONG THE CHRISTIANS APPEARS GOOD AND SOME EXUDE A COCKY CONFIDENCE IN THEIR NEW-FOUND SELF-RELIANCE. MOST EVINCE A DEEP CONCERN THAT THEIR COUNTRY WILL BE DESTROYED. THEIR FEELING OF ABANDONMENT BY US AND THE WORLD IS EXACERBATED BY THEIR LACK OF COMMUNICA-

TION WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

13. WE SHALL BE SENDING SHORTLY A NUMBER OF SUBSTANTIVE CABLES. WE BOTH ATTENDED ALL THE MAJOR MEETINGS AND THE CABLES WILL REPRESENT OUR COMBINED PERCEPTIONS AND THINKING. TO ME, HAIVING DAVID MACK ALONG HAS BEEN OF INESTIMABLE VALUE. I WOULD ADD THAT THE COMMON SENSE, COMPETENCE AND COMPLETE COOPERATION OF OUR TWO SECURITY OFFICERS, PARTICULARLY MARK MULVEY, CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO OUR OPERATIONS.

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